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ABSTRACT

This study had three objectives: (1) to examine and describe factors that help to create a positive attitude toward learning; (2) to examine and describe factors that led to students' participation in the process-oriented approach; and (3) to examine and describe perceptions and experiences that students had involving the process-oriented approach. The primary source of data was a language arts classroom at a middle school in Huntington Beach, California, composed of 33 students (21 boys and 12 girls) ranging in age from 11 to 13 years. Students' writing samples and records of their experiences were analyzed. Results indicated that students displayed a positive attitude about what they were learning, enjoyed what they were doing, and appeared to give it their best effort. Results also indicated that students used a variety of genres in their writing, engaged in the writing process, and actively participated in the stages of the process. However, students were not receiving useful feedback from their peers, and students were not spending an acceptable amount of time on each stage of the writing process. Parents showed a great deal of appreciation for the process-oriented approach. Recommendations include: (1) the research indicating the positive impact of the writing process approach on students' attitudes toward writing must be made available to teachers; and (2) students need more instruction on how to give relevant and helpful feedback to their peers. (RS)

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ED 420 864

TEACHING WRITING USING THE PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH

Lisa Westervelt

1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

Attitude is everything. It embraces the power to make people believe or not believe in their ability to do any task as well as their desire to participate in a specific activity. In the field of education, attitude about learning can have a significant impact on the success of any student, teacher, or program, especially at the middle school level where students are growing and changing at what feels like the speed of light (Routman, 1991). In a language arts classroom, positive attitudes about writing are necessary because the focus of the curriculum is on reading, writing, speaking, and listening with an emphasis on writing about what is being read, heard, or experienced.

Because of a serious advocacy for the teaching of writing using the process-oriented approach, my literature review was based on this topic which lead me to subsequent research on this subject, especially on the impact of this process on the students in terms of their attitude toward writing. In the literature review I found compelling evidence of the effectiveness of using the process-oriented approach to teaching writing. Atwell (1987) clearly explained how ineffective writing programs that don't use the process-oriented approach become "...holding tanks with homogenous groups" where students become uninterested in writing because of tight regulation, few choices of their own in what to write, and no opportunity to confer, share, change, or understand what is really involved in learning to write (1987, p.36). In these teacher-led instructional situations, students felt little control over their own learning according to Atwell (1987).

When young writers get caught up in the product-oriented approach of learning how to write correctly, they may never experience writing to learn about themselves, their values, their experiences, and their environment (Reeves, 1997). Research persistently shows that writing becomes a powerful tool for helping students grapple with complex ideas and problem solving activities when used in a community setting with the opportunity to move back and forth between thinking through ideas, drafting, and redrafting according to Husen and Neville (1994). The process-oriented approach encourages this practice-like atmosphere where traditional lecturing and grading take a back seat, and students are free to express themselves through written language (Reeves, 1997).

By doing the literature review, I learned what it takes to run a successful writing program and how key components of the process-oriented approach can help students in their quest of learning to write/writing to learn. Since this approach offers students the opportunity to choose their own topics, the students were able to conquer the evil writer's block demon that infiltrates many language arts' classrooms (Atwell, 1987). Students then have the opportunity to transcend and transform their lives through writing because they get to write for various purposes as well as various audiences according to Power (1995). With this ability to choose what to write about, the students become empowered to write with more authority and voice because they are being treated like real-world authors and writing using the process that real-world authors use (Gradwohl and Schumacher, 1989).

Reaching all types of students can be a challenge in any classroom situation. Educational theory and research, though, agrees that writing programs that involve the

process-oriented approach help non-English speaking students to not feel alienated from the rest of the students in the classroom according to Frank (1995). This approach encourages them to write about experiences and individual differences which give their writing a powerful purpose. However, since all students are given regular opportunities to write, they can grow and explore at their own pace, which middle school students yearn to do. The approach also gives them the time to respond to other students' writing pieces and conference with their teacher during, not after, the writing process (Husen and Neville, 1994). The students learn that quality writing takes time, effort, and patience because it is not a mystical experience that only happens to a few lucky people (Reeves, 1997). They also learn that they need not be committed to their words in the first draft because writing is a process that involves playing with the language and exploring several different pathways before deciding where to go (Reeves, 1997).

The environment in which we exist impacts how we shape our thoughts and values. As a middle school teacher, I see how the classroom environment plays a crucial role in how students view learning. The process-oriented approach creates a community setting where peer-led instruction vitally affects the learning process (Rothlein and Meinbach, 1991). On-going support is crucial as students share their writing and give feedback to other students about their pieces of writing in a non-threatening way (Flood et al., 1991). As long as students know the criteria on which their writing is being analyzed, they feel safe trying to grow and develop as a writer (Flood et al., 1991). Therefore, assessment of student's work becomes a part of the student's commitment to being responsible for his/her own learning. Since they are graded on a holistic, rubric

type of scale, they learn to focus on higher order concerns and can master each of these concerns by setting goals and developing as a writer (Atwell, 1987).

The type of writing program that I am referring to and the change that is necessary in language arts' classrooms throughout the country involves using the process-oriented approach to teaching writing. As seen in my literature review of this subject, I am a firm believer in the effectiveness of this process because research supports that when teachers use this process, students write more, gain a definite image of themselves as writers, and are learning while using critical thinking skills (Atwell, 1987; Flood et al., 1991; and Frank, 1995). Learning, according to Flood et al. (1991), does not take place in a sequential and linear process, but does involve, "... false starts and tentative explorations" (1991, p.553). Therefore, this approach requires risk-taking and growth rather than on correctness because their writing is evaluated based on goals and development (Frank, 1995).

Since educational theory and research seems to show that using the process-oriented approach in classrooms benefits the students and meets the needs of teachers because skills are taught in context, curriculum is covered, and the components of the approach offer students the chance to actively be responsible for their own learning in the proper environment, I am eager to explore the connection between using the process-oriented approach to writing and student's attitudes or apprehensions about writing. My district and the society as a whole, especially in the business world, require students to be at least adequate in their ability to write for different purposes and audiences. All of the requirements of using the process-oriented approach are outlined in our school plan, especially in terms of giving students time to write, allowing students to go through the

writing process, teaching skills in context, and using a variety of strategies to help students to develop as writers. The district also encourages all teachers to use the process-oriented approach in teaching writing, but they do not mandate that they use this approach.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Because of my research paper and even though the state of California and my district (Westminster) encourage the use of the process-oriented approach to writing in language arts' classrooms, I still had questions about this approach. I saw insurmountable evidence that this approach makes a positive contribution to the teaching of writing, but I found myself wondering whether or not the process-oriented approach had an affect on student's attitude toward writing. Jackson (1992) explained that writing was more than just mechanical skills taught in the product-oriented approach but a way to order experience thereby dealing with the discovery of knowledge rather than the presentation of ideas. So if students are learning to order experiences and discovering knowledge through this approach, does it help to create a positive attitude toward the process of writing? How exactly does the writing process affect students' attitudes toward writing? How do the specific components of the process-oriented approach affect their attitude toward writing? Why does the writing process help them to be less apprehensive about writing? How does their prior experience with this approach affect their attitude toward the writing process?

Adolescents have a plethora of needs as they are embarking on becoming an adult, most of which can be categorized on a physical, intellectual, and social level. School has always been and probably will always be our students' social milieu. Since middle school students look to school for what really matters in their life, they don't look at it as a place to get ready for what really matters in life (Atwell, 1987). The classroom environment has the opportunity to stimulate and meet the needs of the students or deny them that possibility. It came as no surprise to Atwell (1987) that in doing her research, she discovered that the subjects which students liked the best were ones where they could "...routinely collaborate with other students and the teacher, where they have some degree of ownership of the educational product, and where they could be active so that whole-group listening and busy work were minor components of the educational process" thereby helping to fulfill their needs (1987, p.38).

Besides having multiple needs, adolescents (and too many adults for that matter) also appear to be very concerned about how their thoughts and actions are perceived by others. I witness this at my middle school on a daily basis, but I can go just about anywhere like the mall or movie theater and see the same thing. That is why research in the teaching of writing and students' attitudes toward the process is so interesting. You see, writing takes courage, a great deal of courage according to Reeve (1997), because in writing people expose their thoughts and become open to ridicule, criticism, and failure. Building student's confidence in their ability to write becomes quite a unique challenge if fear of self-exposure permeates the room.

Some authors, though, have stressed that the actual components of the writing process encourage a positive relationship with the process of writing and therefore, with

writing itself (Atwell, 1987). Manning and Lucking (1993) stress the support students receive in a process-oriented writing environment as beneficial because with peer-led instruction in a community environment students are more willing to take risks. Flood et al. (1991) stresses the effective routines of the process where students are able to internalize the stages of writing and feel encouraged to do new things with language and words. Because of the gentle responses that come during, not after, the writing process, students are able to have individualized, oral conferences with their teacher or their peers where they are able to reflect on their own writing (Daiute, 1989). Students can connect to the learning process while experiencing the writing process because they draw on their own ideas as they choose what to write about (Sudol and Sudol, 1991) and because they are given time to write, they can experience choices that real-world authors experience (Atwell, 1991). Writing experts also agree that if you explore your thoughts and feelings about new information in writing, it helps to make these thoughts and feelings part of your own thinking, which in turn helps you to learn about them (Sebranek et al., 1995).

The study that follows had several objectives. One of those objectives was to examine and describe factors that help to create a positive attitude toward writing. The second objective was to examine and describe factors that led to their participation in the process-oriented approach. Thirdly, it was also necessary to examine and describe perceptions and experiences that students had involving the process-oriented approach.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to better understand the affect of the process-oriented approach on students' attitude toward writing and answer my questions in this area, I needed to conduct qualitative research to explore the process-oriented approach from the participant's (student's) perspective. I immersed myself in the situation while students used the process realizing that I was examining context-bound generalizations. To collect the most useful data I needed to use ethnographic interviews, observe the participants during the process acting as a coach and collaborator, and analyze documents such as students' writing samples and records of their experiences that they log on a chart. Checklists that observe writing productivity and behaviors during the writing process were used in order to record data. Since I will not be manipulating any variables, I will focus on discovering information with the objective of finding out how students feel about the process-oriented approach and how those feelings impact their attitudes toward writing.

SAMPLE

While a conceptual framework helped to guide interpretations of the responses, I wanted respondents to be able to define their own experiences. The primary source of data was one language arts classroom at a middle school in Huntington Beach, California, composed of thirty-three male and female students ranging in age from eleven to thirteen. There were 21 boys and 12 girls Their ability levels ranged from below average to above average (including gifted). All of them were communicatively fluent in English, but 25%

spoke another language fluently as well. They had come to this school from a variety of surrounding feeder schools and were of multiethnic dissent. The majority of them came from middle class, two-parent families and have lived in the area most of their lives. The method of sampling involved purposeful sampling strategies

ACTION PLAN

Because participants (students) were asked to recall past experiences, significant time and follow up were involved in this study. Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) involving attitudinal statements were conducted at the beginning of the school year in September after the writing process was introduced to the students, and then again at the beginning of the fourth and final quarter of the year. That way I had a pretest, treatment, and a posttest using an instrument where students rated attitudinal statements. The interviews helped to examine and describe students' perceptions and experiences with the process-oriented approach as well as their attitude toward learning this approach and how it might influence their confidence in their writing.

Doing open-ended observation encompassed looking at student's records (called teachers conference records-SEE Appendix B) that are recorded in the form of a chart kept in their writing folders to examine the experiences students' had in using the process-oriented approach. This inquiry also involved examining the quality of work accomplished by the students and the amount of work they accomplished (increase in length of a piece of writing from one stage of the process to the next). It also involved observing the behaviors of the students' during the process (writer's workshop involved

the process-oriented approach) to distinguish factors that helped to shape their attitudes toward writing, how much they were actually participating in the process, and what led them to participate in the process. Note taking was done as interviews and observations occurred (See Appendix C for checklist used during observations). To assure reliability in this study, data was collected using a variety of strategies and sources of information. Data was not collected on a pretest and posttest basis, just on a case study basis after all of the students had been using the process-oriented approach to writing for three quarters of the school year.

As the researcher of this applied research, I teach seventh grade language arts and social studies in a core situation at Stacey Intermediate in Westminster School District. I have been teaching at the middle school level for four years and taught English at the high school level for six months. I have had extensive training in teaching the writing process including having a master teacher and mentor teacher who is involved in the South Basin Writing Project at CSULB. I have also participated in the state scoring of the CLAS exam and wrote the writing prompt for a district-wide assessment writing exam.

OTHER STAFF

Teachers, administrators, aides, and other staff need to be assessed on their attitudes toward the writing process. Unstructured interviews need to be conducted in the beginning of the school year and at the end of the year to examine their perceptions and experiences with the process-oriented approach. Unfortunately do to the time constraints

of this study, I was only able to assess this group of individuals one time on a case study basis. It is extremely important to assess their attitudes, though, because they have influence over the way students feel and they need to be encouraged to model a positive attitude toward the use of the process-oriented approach.

I plan to do an in-service on the process-oriented approach for new teachers as well as for any veterans in order to encourage using the approach and make sure teachers are aware of effective and innovative techniques that make the process run smoothly. I would show them how to organize teaching the writing process, systems to document information, and ways to run the program effectively. Anchor papers from my prior students and rubrics would help them understand how to assess writing when using this process. Surveys will be taken at the end of in-service to assess if their opinion of the process has changed and examine their attitude toward using the process now that they have learned how it operates.

I would provide results of this applied research study to people who attended the in-service and the staff as a whole so they could examine students' attitudes toward the process-oriented approach in order to understand the perspective of the students. Assessment as to whether or not this affected their attitude toward the process was done as part of the next in-service in the form of questionnaires.

Another in-service would be offered dealing with how aides, teachers, administrators, and other staff people could help students who are perceived or seen as having a negative attitude toward writing or are apprehensive about writing in the process-oriented approach (referred to as at risk students). Suggestions will be made as to how to help these students feel more confident about their writing through conferences,

helping with writers' block, working on them giving and receiving more quality feedback, and helping them to explore or play with language more as they go through the process. Questionnaires will be filled out six weeks after the in-service to assess if their has been any change in their "at risk" students in their classroom.

Teachers, aides, administrators, and other staff will be required to observe teachers who use the process-oriented approach in their classrooms in order for them to examine and describe their perception of the students' attitude toward the process so they can see what is going well and what areas are having difficulties. They need to document precise, detailed descriptions of students and situations in order to assess the attitudes of these students. This documentation will be examined for specific perceptions of students' attitudes toward writing when using the process-oriented approach.

PARENT OR GUARDIAN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

First at the beginning of the year, I surveyed parents'/guardians' attitudes toward the writing process to find out their perceptions of the process. By understanding their attitude toward the writing process, I was able to examine what they knew about it in order to be able to encourage those who were not familiar with the process to learn about it so that they could assist their children with any stage of it if necessary.

Then I offered parents/guardians the opportunity to attend a family writing night for two hours on a Wednesday evening to teach the writing process to the whole family. They were able to participate in the process with their children and learn what they needed to do to help their children build more confidence in their writing ability as well

as improve their attitudes toward writing by modeling positive attitudes toward the process-oriented approach to writing. This was an ideal opportunity to encourage family writing time in their homes so that they could continue modeling positive attitudes toward the writing process. This part of the plan could be assessed based on attendance of family writing night and an evaluation form that the parents filled out at the end of the evening.

I sent home information about opportunities for the students to get published by entering contests, youth expo, or sending writing pieces to newspapers that publish children's pieces of writing so that parents/guardians can promote writing for a specific purpose as well as a specific audience. Also, a newsletter assembled by the students in my writers' workshop class was sent home on a quarterly basis with students' pieces of writing in it to provide evidence of improved attitudes about writing in the classroom.

RESULTS

I hear and I forget;

I see and I remember;

I do and I understand.

--Chinese proverb

The results of this study revolved around some emergent themes. Both the interviews and the open-ended observation showed implications that the process-oriented

approach had impact on students' attitudes toward writing. It was apparent that most of the students in the study who had not experienced the process-oriented approach struggled with writing in their prior writing experiences. Overall though, through the research process, I was able to learn not only about the students' perceptions of their experiences with the process-oriented approach, but review my own perceptions and experiences in teaching this approach.

The semi-structured interviews that took place confirmed some basic assumptions and led to several new discoveries as well. All interviews involved a 1-2-3-4-5 Likert scale where the students were asked to give their thoughts about the process-oriented approach. In the pretest I discovered that more than half of the students had a great deal of experience with the process-oriented approach in their previous classes prior to this one. Their overall feeling about writing indicated that only 30% of them liked it, but about 50% of those who had not learned this process indicated that this approach to writing sounded interesting and thought it could help them with their writing ability as well as with their confidence in their writing. Many of them were not sure whether or not this approach would make them less apprehensive toward writing.

In the posttest interview the students were asked on a more in-depth level to reflect on their experiences with the process-oriented approach. They were asked how they felt about using this method in learning to write. About two-thirds of them said that they liked learning the process and going through it in order to learn how to write better. Surprisingly, about 70% of the students said that the process-oriented approach to writing made them feel less apprehensive about writing and more confident about their writing ability because of the components of this approach which allowed them to compose so

many different drafts, share their writing and get feedback, and not have to commit to the written words that they used in the first draft. Students were in agreement that previous writing programs that were not involving the process-oriented approach made them feel unsuccessful in their ability to write well. They also felt that their writing was assessed fairly in the process-oriented approach. Most of them said they actually looked forward to writer's workshop and frequently asked if we could have it every day of the week.

The students also claimed that the writing process helped them to be less apprehensive about writing because they learned that though positive self talk, reclaiming their own voice, and practicing writing that they could grow and develop as a writer. A majority of them agreed that the components of the process-oriented approach (such as time, ownership, feedback, the environment, etc.) played a major part in their attitude toward the approach. Overall, they felt as though their attitude toward writing was positive when they were involved in using the process-oriented approach.

Through the observation part of this research, it was apparent that students exhibited behaviors that would indicate a positive attitude toward the process-oriented approach to writing (see Appendix D). Behaviors that were most frequently exhibited were following the stages of the process, appearing comfortable in the environment, and engaged in the process while also able to initiate discussion in the conferences. Other behaviors that occurred often were setting achievable goals, displaying body language that indicates engagement in the process, and listening during the mini-lesson. Occurring only sometimes were behaviors like: attempting to stay on task, appearing focused on writing, following directions for each stage of the process, and using a variety of

strategies during the writing process. The behavior that occurred rarely involved spending an acceptable amount of time on each stage of the process.

The other part of the observational research involved looking at the students' writing folders and assessing attitude based on productivity and focus. Surprisingly, most of the students showed growth and development in their writing on a regular basis. I found that students often used a variety of genres, actively played with language, and went through every stage of the writing process. Changes were only sometimes made at every stage of the process, and the length and depth of their writing increased sometimes as well. The most interesting discovery was that rarely did the students help their peers with useful feedback.

Observationally, this part of the research helped to show that students were somewhat less apprehensive about writing when using the process-oriented approach because they were engaged in the process and the length and depth of their writing did increase. Because they were comfortable in the process-oriented environment and showed growth and development in their writing ability, it appears as though this approach affected their attitude in a positive way. The components of the process such as time, choice of topics, learning skills in context, and problem solving can be seen as helping to create a positive attitude toward the writing process because students behaviors were favorable in regards to these components.

The results of the questionnaire from teachers, administrators, aides, and other staff members showed that a great deal of the these people use or are familiar with the process-oriented approach to teaching writing. More than 70% of those surveyed liked the process-oriented approach and had used it in their classroom before or observed usage

of it. Most of them felt that this process frequently helped their students feel more comfortable about their writing ability and thus less apprehensive to write. They also agreed that the components of the process helped to create a positive attitude toward the process because of how these components helped to empower and engage the students. Documentation of the observations that these people did showed that they observed students engaging in the writing process, following the stages of the process, and appearing to internalize the stages of writing as well as the qualities of good writing. Therefore, they believed that the process-oriented approach affected the student's attitude toward writing somewhat positively.

Parents only knew some information about the process-oriented approach, but they felt somewhat positive about what they did know. Most of them felt that the approach helped their child's attitude toward writing quite a bit because their child appeared to be less apprehensive toward writing since they began using this approach. They reported that their child's attitude toward writing was affected somewhat positively by this approach. Eighty-one families (from a school of over 700 students) attended family writing night which I felt was and excellent turn out. They walked away with comments about how valuable they thought this process was, how much they enjoyed the experience, and how they felt that it improved their own attitude about writing and therefore would help them to be better at modeling the process for their children.

CONCLUSIONS

As educators, much of what we say may be forgotten, but what we encourage students to do and the programs that we use to empower them will foster understanding and growth, especially if we do it with them modeling how to do it along the way. Through interviews with students and observation procedures, I discovered that students who were apprehensive about writing did not necessarily lack motivation in regards to doing their work. They did, however, report not having much previous success in prior experiences with school-related writing assignments. Apprehensive writers had more difficulty getting ideas of what to write and produced shorter pieces of writing than those who were familiar with the writing process and less apprehensive about writing.

Atwell says, "Adolescents are ripe to be hooked," so, "With good teaching, this is an age where kids who are going to, become interested and excited" (1987, p.48). That is why writing programs have to invite students to become involved in a sensible, real-world style that empowers them to take responsibility for their own learning. Atwell believes that the students' needs for social relationships can actually, "...serve scholarly ends" (1987, p.49). In my research I saw students capturing and channeling their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in ways that made them feel more independent and school actually appeared to be a place that they wanted to be because they were being challenged to grow and explore new ideas, not just graded and judged on what they produced.

As I watched students' behaviors during my observational research, I began to understand how to deal with students who had negative prior experiences with writing. I saw what a difference it made in them being able to use the process-oriented approach because since they were able to take their piece of writing through a process, they didn't feel as though they had to commit to their words in the first draft. Since writing has been

determined to be not just a mechanical skill but a way to order experience (Husen and Neville, 1994). I noticed that these students seemed to relax more as time went on because they were discovering knowledge rather than just presenting ideas. Students whose first language was not English also seemed to assimilate into the process-oriented approach because they were encouraged to write about their own individual differences and experiences which gave their writing a purpose. This approach also forced them to collaborate and communicate because of they sharing and conferencing that was necessary so they weren't as alienated from discussions in the classroom.

Having all of the opportunities that real world authors does help to create a positive attitude toward writing based on my research. Students were able to write using a variety of genres, go through the stages of the process and show that they were internalizing these stages, and actively engage in what real-world authors engage in (in terms of having time, topic choice, sharing, problem solving, various purposes/audiences, and a comfortable, community-like environment). This adds to the constructivist theory of language and learning in terms of how students construct knowledge by acting in a social context that shapes and constrains that knowledge according to Flood et al.(1991). In addition, students felt that the assessment of their writing was done fairly because this approach required up-front discussion about what they were going to be graded on and they could visually see the rubric used for assessment. Also, they agreed that they were assess somewhat like real-world authors were assessed in terms of commitment to their writing, risk-taking, focus, clarity, mechanics, and content.

What was puzzling, though, was the fact that students were not receiving useful feedback from their peers. This could have resulted from poor listening skills, lack of

understanding of the objectives of the piece of writing, or not clear on how to give constructive feedback. I assumed that collaboration would be one component that could make or break their attitude toward the process-oriented approach, and I did notice that they were somewhat passive in sharing their writing, especially at the beginning of the year and the more apprehensive writers really struggled with this stage of the process, but as they watch their peers dive into sharing their writing, they began to become less apprehensive to share their own writing.

Another puzzling finding was that students were not spending an acceptable amount of time on each stage of the writing process. There are several possibilities as to why this took place. This may have resulted from being apprehensive to really expose themselves in their writing and share all of the details. Maybe some writers believed that what they had to say was not important or if what they said sounded too good, maybe other students won't like them so it's better just to say the minimal amount. Also, when given this much freedom to go at your own pace, some students acted like they were running a race and they wanted to finish their piece of writing not polish it.

In examining the perceptions that other teachers, aides, and administrators had about the process-oriented approach, I realized that they were mostly in favor of the approach, and that they felt it impacted their students' attitudes about writing in a positive manner. However, they felt a great deal of anxiety (as do I) that they weren't doing everything correctly in using this approach. I have concluded that because the approach is so multifaceted, it will always require examination as to what can be done more effectively. Also, each group of students brings different perspectives and experiences to

the teaching of the approach that make it unique and demanding of more stressing of development in specific areas.

Parents showed a great deal of appreciation for the process-oriented approach. They felt like this approach allowed their child to be released from an emphasis on right and wrong while learning to explore new ideas and ways of communicating those ideas. Because they felt that this approach affected their child's attitude in a somewhat positive way and that their children were less apprehensive to write, the children must be reflecting that attitude at home and therefore writing more frequently. Parents realized (mainly from attending family writing night) the importance of modeling struggles that real-world authors encounter and also the importance of teaching kids skills only when they need them (in context).

Fortunately, all of my questions were answered through this research, but several new questions arose as a result of examining this subject on an in-depth basis. I wondered if gender had any impact on the students' attitudes toward writing using the process-oriented approach. I would like to study how the process-oriented approach helped meet the students' needs socially more in-depth because I saw the positive impact on their communication skills and realized that their may be more to it than I was able to examine. I also wondered how I could have more impact on teachers who were not using this process as well as more impact on the district in terms of enforcing the use of this process since it was part of the state and local standards.

Students appeared to go through the process of writing quite naturally while setting achievable goals and growing by taking risks in their writing as well as learning to challenge themselves as they began each new piece. California language arts' content

standards of learning about organization and focus of ideas as well as revising and evaluating writing are being met in using the process-oriented approach to writing. Because students can become empowered by all of the freedom and regulation of their own learning in the process-oriented approach, all students of any ability level or type of intelligence are able to be successful in this approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When I see students displaying a positive attitude about what they are learning, they are enjoying what they are doing and appear to be giving it their best effort. To me, that makes for a life-long learner which is one of the goals of the educational process in the first place. Educational programs, more specifically writing programs, need to promote this type of positive attitude about learning. From my literature review and applied research I believe that the writing process exists to encourage positive attitudes about learning to write as well as writing to learn.

My research showed that students' eagerness to write had a great deal to do with their previous writing experience and Sudol and Sudol (1991) reported the same finding. Therefore, it makes sense that the students need to have a positive experience with the writing process where reasoned and disciplined thinking is promoted at an early age. Current classroom and instructional styles need to be reviewed and evaluate in order to examine whether or not teachers are using the process-oriented approach and whether or not it is helping to promote a positive attitude toward writing. If teachers aren't using this

approach, current research and literature needs to be made available to them so they can see the impact of it on the students' attitude toward writing. Teachers can't help students' build positive writing experiences if they aren't attempting to use programs like the process-oriented approach that empower their students to become like real-world authors, gives them time to write, and teaches them to change and build on ideas as they explore or play with language.

Based on the findings of this study, students need more instruction on how to give relevant and helpful feedback to their peers. I would recommend several mini-lessons where teachers and students work together modeling good listening skills, what to listen for, and how to give constructive feedback. If they learn to do this better, they will also improve their own writing because they will understand how to critically analyze what they have said, see what is missing, and experiment with language to find the most effective way to clearly communicate what they want to say. The other problematic area seemed to be in spending an acceptable amount of time on each stage of the process. The best way to deal with this dilemma is to monitor students' progress as closely as possible, and teach them to monitor themselves as to whether or not they are ready to move on to the next stage or whether or not they are rushing the process just to get to the finish line.

Self-directed problem solvers are needed to propel this world into the next century, and problem solving is clearly a process As educators, we need to use programs and curriculum in our classroom that teach kids that learning anything is a process. Teaching children how to communicate effectively using written language is challenging no matter what program one uses; however, teaching them how to direct their own efforts in writing by following a logical process promotes a self-confidence that is necessary for

them to develop or maintain a positive attitude toward writing. Teachers need to think of the kind of support students need to successfully engage in the process-oriented approach, model and share their own struggles as writers, and monitor the behaviors as well as productivity of students as they grow as writers.

To continue promote positive attitudes towards writing by using this process, teachers need to facilitate change so that other teachers, administrators, aides, and parents are educated about the benefits of this process to their children and students. Acceptance of long-standing practices and customs often results in attitudes of benign neglect or indifference on the part of a staff or administration. These attitudes can stand as roadblocks to the uncertain and difficult course which change must navigate.

If research clearly supports the theory that the process-oriented approach promotes a positive attitude toward writing, then why doesn't curriculum follow that theory and research? What else can I do to ensure that this process is used and understood by all who come in contact with it? Well, all I can do is reach as many people as I can by explaining my own experiences and research. Additional in-services for staff, administrators, aides, and even parents can also help to disseminate information about the positive effects of this process. The findings of this study, though, will be communicated to administrators, staff, parents, and the district in order for them to do something about making sure that students have the opportunity to develop the positive attitude that is achievable in using this approach.

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of my attitude...," said an anonymous poet with an incredible zest for life. How can we sit back and not help our students realize the impact of their attitudes while discovering the amazing world of

written communication and the possibilities that exist from this medium? There is no other proven program like this process that meets the needs of culturally diverse students, fosters self-regulation, and gives teaches the chance to have regular personal contact with every student. The choice is all in our attitude.

(CONTINUED)

- The process-oriented approach to teaching writing helps to create a positive attitude toward writing because of the structure of the approach and how it helps students to become responsible for their own learning. Therefore, when students are given time to write, a community environment, and feedback during the process while learning skills in context with individualized goals, they write more and have more confidence in their own writing.
- Parents, administrators, and other staff members need to encourage the use of this approach by all teachers when giving writing assignments.
- Districts need to require curriculum and textbooks that follow the process-oriented approach to teaching writing.
- Review of current research and in-service training should be required by all staff members in regards to the process-oriented approach.
- Students need work on how to give helpful feedback and understanding how much time they need to spend on each stage of the process.

goes through every stage of the process		
increases length and depth of wrtg		
actively plays with language		
uses a variety of genres		
makes changes at every stage		
shows growth & development		
gives useful feedback to peers		
attempts to stay on task		
spends acceptable amount of time on each stage of the process		
appears engaged in the process		
follows stages of the process		
follows directions for each stage of the process		
listens during mini-lessons		
uses a variety of strategies in wrtg		
displays body language that shows engagement in writing		
appears comfortable writing in this environment		
appears focused on writing		
initiates discussion in conferences		
sets achievable goals		

Presented by Lisa Westervelt
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INTRODUCTION

Based on the fact that language arts curriculum focuses on reading, writing, speaking, and listening, teaching writing using the process-oriented approach makes logical and theoretical sense. Students need to feel in control of their own learning and this process allows them to take responsibility for their learning while internalizing the steps down a pathway to quality writing.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

- How does the writing process affect students' attitudes toward writing?
- Does the writing process help students to be less apprehensive about writing?
- How does students' prior experiences with writing affect their attitudes toward the writing process?
- How do the components of the process-oriented approach affect students' attitudes toward writing?
- Does the process-oriented approach help to create a positive attitude toward writing?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative Research: 1. **Semi-structured Interviews** (ethnographic) were conducted with attitudinal statements in order to examine and describe perceptions and experiences that students had involving the process-oriented approach and factors that helped to create a positive attitude toward writing in this process. 2.**Open-ended observation** of students' using the process-oriented approach was conducted. Observation was also done in terms of examining students' records to have a clear understanding of their level of productivity and focus in relation to their attitude toward writing and this process.

CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The process-oriented approach helps students to form a definite image of themselves as writers because this study showed that students were using a variety of genres in their writing, engaging in the process, and actively participating in the stages of the process.
- Their is a direct relationship between a positive attitude toward writing the process-oriented approach because of evidence of increased productivity, engagement in the process by all who participated, and growth/development in the students ability to write.